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NSC BRIEFING

11 July 1957

SYRIAN-ISRAELI BORDER INCIDENT

I. Fighting on Israeli-Syrian border at Gonem, north of Lake Hule, on 9 July most serious incident since Sinai, according to Col, Leary, acting chief Armistice Commission.

A. Israelis charge Syrians with using artillery, while Syrian claim Israelis used armor.

B. Casualties: 1 Israeli killed, 7 wounded; 2 Syrians killed, 2 wounded.

C. Situation quiet on 10 July except for unconfirmed Israeli allegation of Syrian sniping.

II. Director-General Israeli Foreign Office, Eytan, assured the UN that Israel will not retaliate. Leary feels situation dangerous and main threat to peace from Syrian side.

III. The Syrian radio threatens "war" if Israelis strike Syria and the Egyptian radio says Egypt would aid Syria under the terms of their military alliance.

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A.

[REDACTED] Israeli reluctance to have full-

25X1X scale UN discussion of continued tension along Syrian border may act as a brake.

B. Foreign Minister Meir left Paris hurriedly for Tel Aviv--said situation has become "very serious."

IV. We think incident may have been caused by left-wing Syrian officers in effort to unite Syrian army elements contesting for power.

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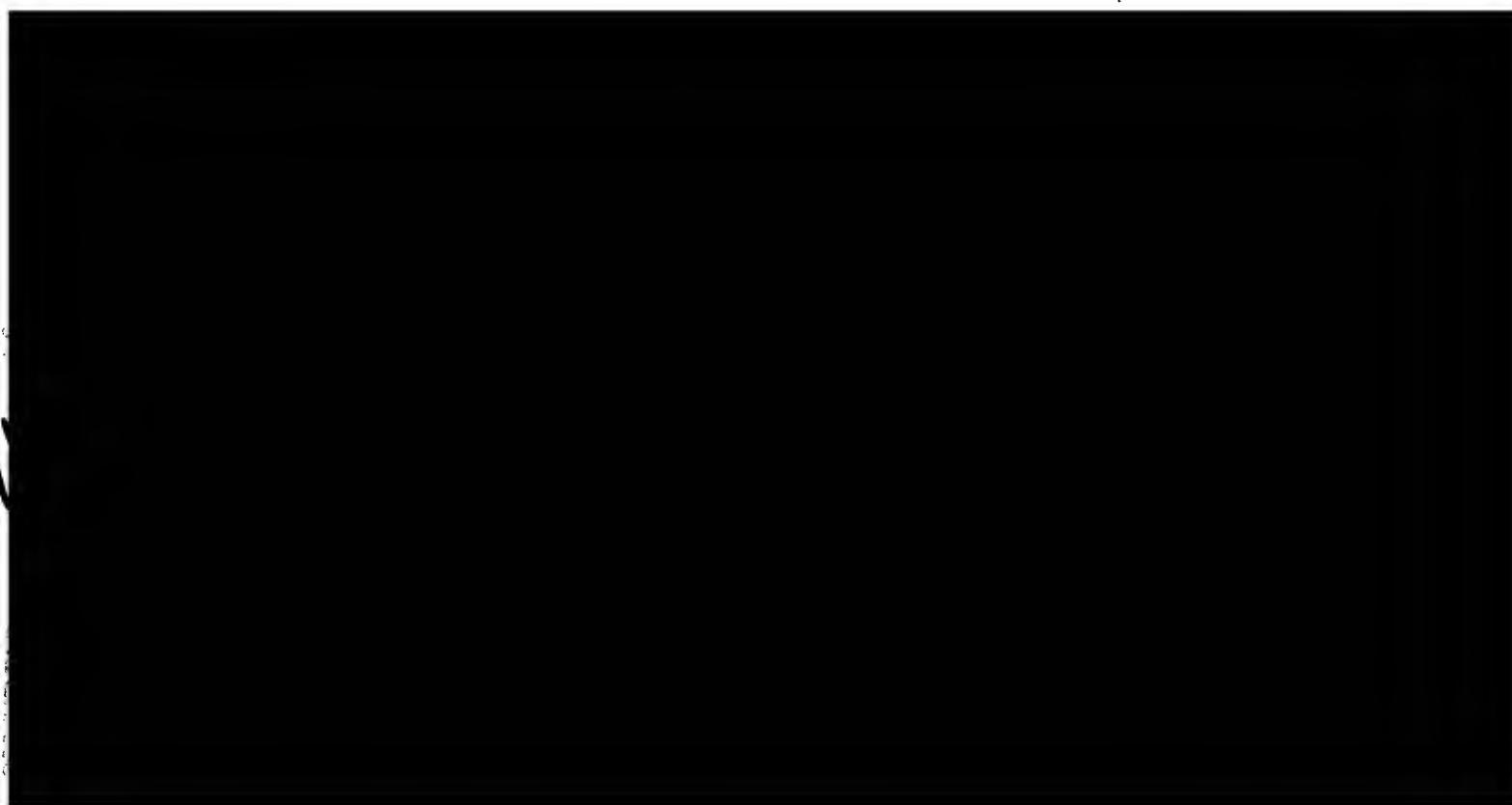
ISRAELI - SYRIAN

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II. SYRIA

A. The Syrian army numbers about 55,000 men, about 40,000 of whom are deployed south of Damascus toward the Israeli front. The Syrian army has been extensively reequipped with Soviet weapons - including tanks, artillery, and self-propelled guns. However, with the considerable reduction in the size of the Soviet advisory mission, effective operation of the bloc equipment will be impaired. The Syrian army is not credited with an appreciable offensive capability, and its overall capability as a fighting force remains mediocre - partly because of officers' preoccupation with politics. Positions on the Israeli front are essentially defensive.

B. The Syrian air force is believed to have about 49 jet fighters (20 MIG-17, 6 MIG-15, and 23 Meteors). Syrian air combat effectiveness remains low.

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